



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 91st CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 116

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1970

No. 13

Senate

GOODELL TESTIMONY IN VIETNAM HEARINGS

Mr. GOODELL. Mr. President, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations today opened a historic new series of hearings on Vietnam.

These hearings, I believe, will make a vital contribution in lighting a way out of this tragic conflict.

As the author of the first bill that has been introduced in the Senate to achieve disengagement from Vietnam, I was privileged to be the leadoff witness in these highly important hearings.

In my testimony, I have attempted to explain my reservations concerning the current administration policies on Vietnam.

I also testified about my own legislative proposal, S. 3000, the Vietnam Disengagement Act. Introduced last September, S. 3000 is a bill requiring the complete withdrawal of all U.S. military personnel from Vietnam by December 1, 1970. It is the only proposal now before the Senate that would have the force of law—that would, if enacted, insure that the United States terminate its direct military involvement in this hopeless war.

Mr. President, the Foreign Relations Committee's hearings are of vital national significance. The distinguished chairman of the committee (Mr. Fulbright) and the other distinguished

committee members, should be commended for taking the initiative to provide this much-needed review of Vietnam policies.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of my testimony on Vietnam before the Foreign Relations Committee be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the testimony was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

VIETNAM: THE THINGS THAT SEEM AND THOSE THAT ARE

(Testimony of Senator CHARLES E. GOODELL before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, February 3, 1970)

Mr. Chairman, I obviously do not agree with the President's Vietnam policy—although I feel he should be commended for reversing the military escalation so disastrously implemented by the previous Administration and for reducing the level of combat forces in Vietnam.

I fear the path the Administration is taking is fraught with illusion and danger.

We have not Vietnamese the war; we have cosmetized it.

We have painted a happy scene where Saigon prevails while we withdraw. Behind the facade of this Potemkin village, the facts of Vietnam remain as ugly as ever.

Vietnamization has been a great public relations success. Every month, the polls

February 3, 1970

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—SENATE

S 1093

show that more Americans support it. But the war is not a public relations problem.

It is said that the war has been "defused" by the Administration. This assumes the war is something taking place in this country—that it is over when the President's "silent majority" thinks it is over.

The real war—the war going on there, in Vietnam—has not been defused. The Vietcong has not been defused. The powerful North Vietnamese Army has not been defused. Neither has the political and social decay that debilitates the Saigon government and army.

If there is one thing clear in Vietnam today, it is that the overwhelming majority of the people want peace—and that they are governed by a military clique that wants war.

The people of South Vietnam are truly the "silenced majority." It is an illusion to claim we are fighting to preserve the "self determination" of the people.

Vietnam is a hothouse for illusions. The new policy has been wrapped in the same mantle of official optimism that formerly cloaked the old approach of military escalation.

The intractable realities of Vietnam—the vitality and determination of the enemy and the lack of these qualities in our allies—have made shambles of earlier policies. I fear these realities will do the same to present policies.

I. THE PRICE OF PRESENT POLICIES

Administration not planning true disengagement

The President's plan is not a true policy of disengagement. It is not a covert or delayed version of the complete withdrawal policy I have been urging. It is, at best, a plan to scale down U.S. ground combat activities in Vietnam—although, as the Tet Offensive in 1968 showed, such a reduction is subject to the veto of the enemy so long as substantial numbers of Americans remain.

In recent testimony before this Committee, Secretary of State Rogers used four different formulations in describing the Administration plan—formulations which in fact are far from equivalent:

(1) "... to permit the people of South Vietnam to determine their own future without outside interference."

(2) "... to achieve an end to the American involvement in the war."

(3) "... to withdraw all of our forces from Vietnam."

(4) "... to lead to an end of the American engagement in hostilities in Vietnam."

While the first three may represent ultimate hopes, there are indications that only the fourth describes the practical, immediate commitment of the Administration. In other words, the Administration has merely adopted a combat reduction strategy, aimed at cutting back American casualties to a level where a continued U.S. presence in Vietnam would be "acceptable" to American public opinion.

II. VERBAL ESCALATION

According to informed sources, the Administration plans to retain close to 300,000 troops in Vietnam until the beginning of 1971.

Serious consideration is apparently being given to a very small troop reduction during 1971—one that would only bring the level of troops remaining in Vietnam down to about 250,000 by the beginning of 1972.

The Administration also is contemplating the retention of a "residual force" in Vietnam for an unspecified and possibly indefinite period.

The residual force level being advocated by military circles, in the Pentagon, is 20,000. As the staff report on Vietnam policy released yesterday by your Committee indicates, Amer-

icans and Vietnamese officials in Saigon are discussing a still higher figure of 250,000.

The lowest residual force figure that has been quoted is about 30,000, attributed to the Secretary of Defense.

Even a relatively "low" residual force figure of 30,000 represents a permanent commitment larger than the level of U.S. troops in Vietnam at the beginning of 1965—which, according to many observers at the time, compelled President Johnson to escalate under Communist pressure.

Human and material costs

The human and material costs of continuing so large an American presence for so long are totally unacceptable.

The price of present policies will be anywhere from 5,000 to 20,000 Americans dead in the next three years.

The price will be anywhere from 20,000 to 100,000 Americans wounded during that time. A tragic and disproportionate number will be maimed for life.

The price will be anywhere from \$40 and \$60 billion in that period. These figures must be measured in the opportunities foregone to respond to urgent domestic needs.

No U.S. interest in Vietnam justifies the sacrifice of so many American lives in this seemingly interminable war.

No U.S. interest in Vietnam justifies the maiming of so many young Americans.

No U.S. interest in Vietnam justifies squandering these huge sums, at the expense of meeting the problems of hunger, poverty, slums, and environmental decay in this nation.

These are the costs of present policies if everything goes according to plan. If it does not, the price will be more staggering still.

And there are reasons to fear that not everything will go according to plan.

III. THREATS TO THE UNITED STATES

While abandoning actual military escalation, the President seems recently to have embarked on a course of verbal escalation that has its own grave risks.

The President's threats

On two occasions last year—November 3rd and December 15th—the President has sought to warn the enemy against increasing the level of their activities while we are reducing our forces, saying:

"Hanoi could make no greater mistake than to assume that an increase in violence will be to its advantage. If I conclude that increased enemy action jeopardizes our remaining forces in Vietnam, I shall not hesitate to take strong and effective measures to deal with that situation."

In his press conference last Friday, he very much raised the verbal stakes of his warning, by saying:

"If at a time that we are attempting to escalate the fighting in Vietnam, we find that they take advantage of our troop withdrawals to jeopardize the remainder of our forces by escalating the fighting, then we have the means—and I will be prepared to use those means strongly—to deal with that situation more strongly than we have dealt with it in the past."

Threats no deterrent

Given the drastic methods that have been used in past years to punish the enemy, the warning that we are prepared to act "even more strongly than we have in the past" strikes an ominous note of possible re-escalation.

For six and a half years, however, this strategy has not succeeded. There is no reason to expect it to succeed now.

Beginning with the first bombing raids on the North after the Gulf of Tonkin incident, President Johnson sought to dissuade the enemy from attacking our forces by initiating, or threats of increasing, severity for such attacks. This strategy was a failure. It did

not deter the enemy. It only emboldened us ever deeper in the war.

I cannot see why the enemy will be deterred by President Nixon's threats of reprisal, when it was not deterred by President Johnson's actual reprisals. I cannot see why escalation in words will succeed where escalation in deed failed.

Enemy has the initiative

The unpalatable fact is that the military initiative in Vietnam remains where it always has been—in the hands of the enemy. Our adversaries—not the South Vietnamese or ourselves—control the level and intensity of the fighting.

The Communists continue to be in a position to choose whether to strike, to choose the most advantageous moment to strike, and to choose the manner of striking most deleterious to our policies. This point was aptly made in your recent Committee staff report, on the basis of first-hand observations:

"It seemed clear to us, however, that no one has the slightest idea whether the enemy will attack in force during the time the United States is in the process of withdrawing combat forces in order to accelerate the American withdrawal, shake confidence in the South Vietnamese Government, demoralize the army, and disrupt pacification; whether the enemy will continue the 'high point' pattern until American combat forces are withdrawn and then strike; or whether, even then, the enemy will concentrate on political subversion and competition in preference to a reintensified military effort. Those who hold these various theories appear tacitly to agree, however, that the choice lies with the enemy."

Incentive for enemy offensives

The Administration's plan for retention indefinitely of a "residual force" in Vietnam—and for maintenance of large forces there for the next several years—may well serve as an inducement to the enemy for offensive action. The longer any contingent of American troops remains in Vietnam, the greater may be the incentive on the Communist side to raise American casualties in order to increase domestic pressure on the U.S. for the troops' return.

In a recent article in the *New York Times Magazine*, former Under Secretary of State George Ball suggests one possible scenario for enemy action: North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces would continue the present lull in the fighting until our pressure for withdrawals had acquired a sustained momentum. Then they would launch a series of major offensives in order to raise the pressure for further withdrawals and undermine confidence in the South Vietnamese army and government.

Psychological impact of enemy action

It should also be borne in mind that future Communist offensives, like the Tet offensive of two years ago, might understand our policies even if they do not achieve their military objectives.

Lyndon Johnson claimed that Tet was a Communist defeat. In the strict military sense, he was right—for the enemy was thrown back from the cities with enormous losses. In the much more important sense, he was wrong, for Tet was a major psychological and political victory for the enemy, demonstrating to the American public the delusions of the administration of escalation.

The popular success of the Tet offensive rests on its appearance as a militarily hopeless course: one that permits us to believe the South Vietnamese regime is failing. We can pull out gradually with relative impunity. It would not be difficult for the enemy to plan and execute a series of surprise actions that would make the plan of disengagement seem far from plausible.

February 3, 1970

The unpalatable choices

After making the threats he has, what choices are open to the President if the Communists elect an offensive course?

He has three choices, all of them unpalatable.

He could slow down or stop American withdrawals. This would prolong the American involvement and increase American casualties and costs.

He could carry out his threats and initiate harsh reprisals. This would be a return to the disastrous road of escalation.

He could back down from his threats and continue to withdraw. This would be the most painful and internally divisive way of accomplishing the desirable objective of withdrawal.

III. HANOI'S AND SAIGON'S VETO

The Administration plan gives the North and South Vietnamese governments an absolute veto over our withdrawal and tempts them to exercise this veto.

The President says our troop withdrawals will depend upon three factors: progress at Paris, level of enemy activity, and Vietnamization. Each can be blocked by Hanoi or Saigon.

Hanoi's veto

Hanoi decides whether there is to be movement in the Paris talks. For the past year and a half, it has decided that in the current negotiating context there can be no progress.

Moreover, by retaining our close identification with the military government of South Vietnam and by refusing to commit ourselves unequivocally in the negotiations to the principle of complete withdrawal of all American troops, we have created no inducement for a more flexible Communist negotiating position in the future.

Hanoi and the Vietcong decide upon the level of enemy actions and, for reasons already discussed, our present policies may tempt them to step up this activity.

Saigon's veto

Saigon decides upon Vietnamization. The speed with which South Vietnam can take over the burden of the fighting from American troops depends upon the capacity and morale of the South Vietnamese government.

The recent staff report of your Committee points to some of the obstacles to Vietnamizing South Vietnamese forces:

"As far as problem areas are concerned, it is common knowledge that the quality of South Vietnamese Army units is uneven. The desertion rate continues to be high. We were repeatedly told that officer leadership is still a major problem, especially at the middle and lower ranks. There has apparently been little progress in broadening the social base from which officers are drawn and even less in promoting noncommissioned officers... Various Vietnamese stressed the continuing problems resulting from the low military pay scales."

"There is still heavy dependence on the United States by South Vietnamese Army combat units. Even the 1st Division, supposedly the best in the South Vietnamese Army, requires massive U.S. support and depends heavily on helicopters, 60 percent of which are American."

In this connection, I would note that a colleague of considerable military background, Senator Goldwater—whose views on the war otherwise are diametrically opposed to mine—has recently returned from Vietnam with his own pessimistic assessment of Vietnamization.

Moreover, Vietnamization faces political hazards that are even more formidable than the military ones.

The Saigon government has been maintained in power for years almost solely by the American military presence. Its political base continues to rest mainly on a small

group of army officers and North emigres. It has steadfastly refused to permit any participation by perhaps the most important non-communist elite in Vietnam—the Buddhist leadership. It has systematically branded as "neutralists" and "traitors," non-communists who have not supported a wholly military solution to the war.

The United States has for years been pressuring Saigon to "broaden its base." The effort has been an unqualified failure. In a reorganization last year, General Thieu expelled virtually all the civilians from key posts in his cabinet and replaced them with hard-line army officers. Only last week, he proposed a constitutional amendment to bar all communists-supported groups from participating in future elections—having already barred "neutralists" from participating in the 1967 elections.

If such a regime were able to survive at all after the departure of American forces, it could only do so by undertaking drastic reforms and by permitting the participation in the country's political life of elements that are now completely excluded. The simple truth is that the junta presently has no intention of going forward with this painful process—painful because it would require the junta to share its power with others—since it can cling to the hope of an almost indefinite presence of at least a residual force of American troops.

IV. COMPLETE DISENGAGEMENT

It is time we recognize that this catastrophic war has not been and cannot ever be won.

It is time we perceive that, as I pointed out in 1967, Americans cannot build an Asian society at gunpoint.

It is time we understand that the real interests of our nation in preserving the military junta of South Vietnam are marginal or non-existent; that the human, economic and other costs of prolonging our military presence there clearly outweigh any benefits that could conceivably result from our continued presence.

It is time that we completely and swiftly terminate our military participation in the war, and keep to a minimum any further loss of men, money and prestige.

Essential elements for disengagement

To achieve these objectives, I believe that we must adopt a plan for disengagement that meets the following criteria:

First, it must be a plan for complete disengagement of all American military personnel, both combat and non-combat. It cannot involve the indefinite retention of a residual force of any size in Vietnam. While we must recognize that there may be some risks attending complete withdrawal, they clearly are less than the risks and costs of any extended troop commitment.

Second, it must set a firm target date for the completion of the withdrawal. Our final disengagement cannot be conditional and cannot be deferred by the decisions of Hanoi or Saigon.

Third, the withdrawal should be accomplished with reasonable swiftness, in order to limit the further loss of American lives and the further disruption of American domestic priorities. A reasonable time should be allowed to enable us to withdraw and the South Vietnamese forces to assume the task of the fighting. However, the South Vietnamese do not have the will or the capacity to do so, this should not be cause for delaying our departure.

Finally, public disclosure should be made of our intention to withdraw completely and of our proposed termination date. Such disclosure is essential to provide any hope of broadening the stalemate in Paris and, if possible, to induce the South Vietnamese army and government to make the reforms necessary for their survival.

I have endeavored to embody these principles in the bill I introduced last September, now before this Committee—S. 3060, "The Vietnam Disengagement Act."

The time period

In my bill, I selected a withdrawal deadline of approximately one year from the time of the bill's introduction. I did so because I was convinced a year would minimize further loss of lives and at the same time permit an orderly process of withdrawal of American troops and assumption of their functions by South Vietnamese forces. I stand by the timetable I then proposed.

Let me emphasize, however, that the most important objective is the establishment of a public commitment to withdraw by a specified date within a reasonably short span of time. It would be tragic, indeed, if agreement on this vital objective were obscured by disagreement concerning the setting of the date a few months earlier or later.

Advantages of a fixed deadline

A publicly announced deadline such as I have been proposing would make certain that after a specified date, no more American soldiers would die in Vietnam. The vain sacrifice of thousands of American lives would be over. So would the waste of tens of billions of dollars. We would, at last, be able to turn our energies and resources from fighting this seemingly endless war to solving some of our own urgent problems at home. We would, at last, have the opportunity to heal the profound divisions the war has opened within our own nation.

A publicly announced timetable will permit the American people to comprehend that there can be no guarantee that Saigon will prevail while we withdraw. It will enable the people to perceive that short of an indefinite American military presence, there can be no certainty of preserving the status quo in Vietnam. It makes it clearly understood that the ability of South Vietnam to defend itself must ultimately depend on the willingness of its own army to fight and of its own government to reform.

A public plan certainly will generate controversy. This, however, is preferable by far to tranquility based on illusion. Under any conceivable plan for disengagement there are manifest problems and dangers facing South Vietnam. It is better that the American people become aware of these dangers than that they be lulled into happy euphoria, only to suffer a rude awakening—as they did in 1968 after Tet—and a loss of confidence in this government and its institutions.

Notice to the South Vietnamese Government that we are withdrawing all our forces within a specified period will create a powerful incentive for that regime to mobilize its forces more effectively and to seek the political strength of a broadened base of support.

As a foreign intruder, we have polarized the political situation in the South and driven many nationalist elements toward the NLF. Our withdrawal could help foster a depolarization that would create a more favorable environment for negotiations and a genuine political settlement.

The Guam doctrine

In his Guam doctrine, President Nixon redefined the role of the United States in Asian affairs. He established the principle that Asian nations to which we are allied must bear the primary responsibility for their own defense, especially with respect to their internal security.

Had this principle been applied in 1968, as it should have been, we would never have become ensnared in a land war in Vietnam to preserve an existing government against an essentially internal threat.

Mr. Chairman, I suggest that the Guam doctrine is a sound doctrine, that should now be applied in Vietnam in the same manner as the President proposes to apply it to

February 3, 1970

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE

S 1095

Southeast Asia generally. Applying the Guam principle to Vietnam would mean proceeding with complete disengagement, not merely with troop reduction.

The "bloodbath" argument

In his November 3rd speech, the President contended that a fixed withdrawal timetable would enable the enemy "simply to wait until our forces have withdrawn and then move in." And he warned the public of the bloodbath that would result.

This line of argument seems at odds with the President's own theory of Vietnamization.

The South Vietnamization army has over a million men under arms. North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces in the South total only about one-fifth this number. American withdrawal may require the South Vietnamese army to adopt a more defensive strategy aimed at protecting populous areas—and to abandon its objectives of controlling the entire countryside. To suppose, however, that such a large force, operating in a defensive role, could simply be destroyed by a relatively ill-armed and much smaller enemy assumes profound debilities in the South Vietnamese Army—and this assumption, in turn, would mean that the President's own plan to train the South Vietnamese forces to take over the burden of the fighting would have little or no chance for success in the foreseeable future.

It is difficult to judge whether the Communists would engage in mass reprisals if they were to take of Vietnam. Communist cadres did so when they seized Hue in 1968—under circumstances of long siege and bloody combat activity. No "bloodbath" of Catholics or other anti-Communists was reported following the Communist assumption of power in the North in 1954. The land reform program implemented in the North during the next two years did involve bloodshed, but the targets were among the peasantry in rural areas, including many who had fought the French. It is of interest to note that from 1955 to 1961, the French and the Diem regime submitted only 43 complaints to the International Control Commission alleging political reprisals by the Communists in North Vietnam.

A hypothesis has been advanced by a number of Asian scholars that even if the Communists won complete control of South Vietnam they might well find it contrary to their self-interest to initiate large-scale violence against the civilian population. Such action, they suggest, would diminish the Communists' ability to unite the widely disparate elements of South Vietnamese society. Yet there is no way of dispelling great uncertainty about the course of events, and our departure would not end the political violence on both sides that has been going on in Vietnam for the past 25 years.

In arguing this topic, it is essential to remember that the biggest "bloodbath" of all is occurring as a direct result of the war.

To date, more than one million men, women and children have died as a result of hostilities in Vietnam. Since our government began its program of Vietnamization last year, more than 150,000 soldiers on both sides have died. If the war continues for five years more, another million people will die.

Self-determination

The Administration has spoken a great deal about "self-determination" for the South Vietnamese people. The need to preserve "self-determination" is a primary reason cited by the Administration for delaying the American withdrawal. Thus, in a letter dated December 4, 1969, addressed to this Committee, J. G. Torbert, Jr., Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations, states in commenting on my bill:

"Our fundamental, long-standing, and widely accepted goal in Vietnam (is) the as-

surance of self-determination for the South Vietnamese people. We obviously cannot maintain that goal and at the same time commit ourselves beforehand to the total withdrawal of our troops by a certain date regardless of whether or not that goal has been achieved."

"Self-determination" in this context is a plain deception.

The overriding interest of a clear majority of the South Vietnamese people is peace—to stop the killing, to stop the destruction of the cities, villages and farms of Vietnam.

The overriding interest of the military regime of South Vietnam is war.

It is the war that is the basis of the junta's virtually absolute rule and its (largely corrupt) income. It is the war that gives the narrow clique undergirding the regime an artificially high standard of living based on war profits and commodity imports.

We have long ago made the choice of government for the South Vietnamese people. We have done so by supporting with our armes and with enormous sums of money a military regime which is totally dependent on that support, and which suppresses all political opposition. As long as such a narrowly based government remains in power, there can be no real "self-determination" for the silenced majority in South Vietnam.

V. S. 3000

Mr. Chairman, of the various proposals before you, mine is the only one with any operative effect on the Vietnam war.

My proposal is a bill, not a resolution. It is more than a mere request that the President take a specified course of action. It has the force of law. If enacted, it would accomplish its stated purpose of disengaging the nation from this terrible war.

The bill accomplishes its purpose by cutting off funds for the maintenance of American military personnel after the proposed termination date. This is a proper exercise of Congress' power under the Constitution to control the expenditure of tax money. In principle, it operates no differently than would a bill cutting off or restricting the expenditure of foreign aid moneys in a given country.

The Constitution vests in Congress the power to declare war. Surely Congress should share with the President the responsibility for undeclaring a war that never was declared in the first place.

The bill itself would not preclude the United States from continuing to provide South Vietnam with the military supplies, equipment and aid funds that are necessary to match Soviet military assistance to North Vietnam. That is a separate decision to be made by Congress and the President.

The bill would preserve the President's constitutional prerogative as Commander-in-Chief to determine the manner of combat operations and the method of completing the withdrawal of American troops by the termination date.

Our major role in the war began when Congress adopted the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, and President Johnson interpreted the resolution in a manner that deprived Congress of its responsibilities in the field of foreign affairs.

Last year, Congress took some initial steps in reclaiming these responsibilities by adopting the Commitments Resolution and barring the deployment of combat troops in Laos and Thailand. The enactment of this bill would restore to Congress its proper foreign affairs role.

There is yet another reason why Congress must cease being merely a bystander in this conflict, and assume a partnership with the President in disengaging the nation from Vietnam.

The ending of a major war inevitably involves extremely controversial and sensitive issues—and this is especially true of a war we have not won. If one man—the President,

but also the leader of a political party—bears the responsibility of making these decisions alone, there is great danger that division and partisan recrimination will ensue. If this man shares the responsibility with the members of Congress, who represent both parties and a wide spectrum of opinion, the chances of a solution which will command the confidence of the people are much improved.

President Roosevelt at Yalta took upon himself virtually the entire burden of designing the peace settlement after World War II. The suspicion, bitterness and partisan bickering that followed—typified by the Joseph McCarthy movement in the 1950's—is a matter of history. This time, since the issues are still more delicate, let us be sure the burden is shared.

VI. CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman, President Nixon opened his November 3rd speech on Vietnam by saying:

"The American people cannot and should not be asked to support a policy which involves the overriding issues of war and peace unless they know the truth about that policy."

I agree with this statement. I agree that the American people should know the truth about our Vietnam policy.

The people do not know the policy now. They deserve to know it.

Secrecy about the real intentions will ultimately confuse ourselves more than it will confuse the enemy.

Secrecy breeds the twin evils of suspicion and illusion.

Secrecy will leave the public totally unprepared if events in Vietnam do not develop as we hope.

Let us seek to inform the public, not to mollify it.

Let us seek a majority that is not merely silent but comprehending. Let us seek a majority that understands more than that described by Nicolo Machiavelli five hundred years ago when he said:

"For the great majority of mankind are satisfied with appearances as though they were realities, and are often more induced by the things that seem, than by those that are."